

Department of State**Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Request for Grant Proposals: FY 2015**

Youth Leadership Program: TechGirls

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAPEC-15-001

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.415

Application Deadline: December 2, 2014

Executive Summary:

The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division, of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the FY 2015 TechGirls program under the Youth Leadership Program model. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to conduct a three- to four-week exchange program in the United States in summer 2015 for high school girls from the Middle East and North Africa focused on promoting high-level study of technology. U.S. Embassies in the participating countries and territories will recruit, screen, and select the participants. The program will provide an exchange of academic study of applied technology for girls who already have a demonstrated aptitude and strong interest in the subject, will empower girls to pursue higher education and careers in technology, and will support activities in the participants' home countries that are designed to reinforce and support the skills and linkages acquired during the U.S. program. It is the Bureau's intent to award a cooperative agreement for one base year plus two option years for an estimated total amount of \$570,000. Please see section II.) Award Information, below for additional details.

I. Funding Opportunity Description:

Authority: Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

Background:

Launched in 2011, TechGirls is an intensive, educational youth exchange designed to enable young women to reach their full potential in the field of technology. TechGirls complements the Bureau's TechWomen program and echoes its goals.

The TechGirls program will bring approximately 27 teenage girls from select countries in the Middle East and North Africa to the United States for a three- to four-week exchange program in summer 2015. The exchange will feature a weeklong technology camp that will bring together the program participants with American peers who share similar interests. The camp should be academically rigorous and provide exposure to advanced tools in technology, as well as tools

that can be readily adopted for use in the participants' home countries, through hands-on classes, labs, and individual or team-based projects.

The TechGirls program participants may be integrated into an existing camp held on a university campus or at another venue, or one may be designed specifically for the TechGirls. The camp should be complemented by additional activities such as mentoring experiences, job shadowing, mini-internships, and/or site visits to technology companies in the United States. Participants should be afforded ample opportunity throughout the course of the program to engage in small group work to design and develop projects that are relevant to the field and will produce tangible, presentable outcomes, as well as to plan for follow-on activities. The program will be rounded out by planned social, recreational, and cultural activities; community service activities; home hospitality arrangements with local families such as meals, recreational activities, or homestays; and other activities designed to achieve the program's stated goals. Multiple opportunities for participants to interact meaningfully with their American peers must be included. Follow-on activities that are designed to reinforce and support the skills and linkages acquired during the U.S. program are an integral part of the program.

The Bureau anticipates that the TechGirls participants will be selected from the same Middle East and North African countries that are participating in TechWomen so that TechWomen participants may assist with recruitment and mentoring of the girls once they return home. TechWomen participants are currently expected to be from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian territories, Tunisia, and Yemen.

The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. In addition, the Bureau reserves the right to adjust the participating countries should conditions change in a partner country or if other countries and/or regions are identified as Department priorities.

The goals of the program are to:

- 1) Provide a program of academic study of applied technology for girls who already have a demonstrated aptitude and strong interest in the subject;
- 2) Empower and encourage high school-aged girls to pursue higher education and careers in technology;
- 3) Develop participant skills in cutting edge technologies that are relevant to the participants' home countries;
- 4) Link peers who share interests and abilities;
- 5) Promote problem-solving and critical thinking;
- 6) Equip participants with leadership skills to influence positive change in their communities;
- 7) Promote mutual understanding among the peoples of the United States and the countries and territories of the Middle East and North Africa.

The objectives of the program are for participants to:

- 1) Enhance their understanding of various technological tools and their specific uses and applications in their countries, as well as of how technology is used on a global scale;
- 2) Develop a specific process and step-by-step action plan for designing and implementing follow-on projects in their home communities, utilizing available technologies; and
- 3) Explain and present their community follow-on projects and exchange experiences to broader audiences, such as classmates, community members, among others.

Using these goals, objectives, and the theme of technology, applicant organizations should identify their own specific and measurable outputs and outcomes based on the project specifications provided in this solicitation. Proposals should indicate how recipients will achieve the short-term and long-term program objectives, and how these objectives will contribute to the achievement of the stated long-term goals.

Organizational Capacity:

Applicants must demonstrate their capacity for implementing programs of this nature, focusing on three areas of competency: (1) provision of leadership and technology-focused programming; (2) age-appropriate programming for youth; and (3) demonstrated understanding of and experience working with participants from countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

Applicants are strongly urged to garner private sector support. The Bureau encourages the expansion of the scope of this program beyond what it is able to fund. Private sector monies and in-kind offerings may be used, for instance, to fund additional visits to technology companies in the United States, to increase the number of American students that participate in exchange program activities, or to ramp up activities during the technology camp.

U.S. Embassy Involvement:

U.S. Embassies in the participating countries will recruit, screen, and select the participants; facilitate visas; arrange and purchase international travel, in consultation with the U.S. recipient organization; identify and arrange for adult flight escorts on the international flights at the beginning and end of the exchange; collaborate with the U.S. recipient organization in providing pre-departure briefings and overseeing alumni follow-on activities; and engage TechWomen alumni in their home countries to serve as mentors to the TechGirls alumni, when and where possible.

Guidelines:

The total amount of annual funding will be \$190,000, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. It is anticipated that the cooperative agreement will begin in January 2015. The award period will be approximately 12-16 months, and will cover all aspects of the program planning, U.S.-based exchange activities, and support of follow-on activities in the participants' home countries.

Applicants should propose to host one group of approximately 27 participants. The U.S.-based exchange should take place during a three- to four-week period in July and August 2015 to coincide with the school calendars in the participating countries. Applicants should propose specific exchange dates in their proposals, while being mindful of the dates of Ramadan in 2015. The exact timing of the exchange, however, may be altered through the mutual agreement of the

Department of State and the award recipient. The award recipient must consult with ECA and the participating U.S. Embassies to coordinate and confirm the specific dates of the exchange during the planning phase of the program.

In pursuit of the goals outlined above, the award recipient will be responsible for the following:

- 1) Provide U.S. Embassy Public Affairs staff in participating countries and territories with program materials and logistical information for preparation sessions at the pre-departure orientations.
- 2) Manage logistical arrangements, including any domestic travel, ground transportation, accommodations, group meals, and disbursement of pocket money.
- 3) Conduct an orientation for the TechGirls upon their arrival in the United States and for those participating from the U.S. host communities, including American peers and host families.
- 4) Arrange housing for the participants in a dormitory, hotel, homestay, or some combination thereof and provide staff monitoring of the housing arrangement throughout the exchange. American host families must be properly screened and briefed, and criminal background checks, including a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry, must be conducted for all members of host families (and others living in the home) who are 18 years of age or older.
- 5) Design and plan three to four weeks of exchange activities, including a technology camp, that will provide a creative, interactive, and substantive program aimed at developing the participants' knowledge and skill base in the field of technology. The exchange will include a short trip to Washington, D.C.
- 6) Develop and implement a plan to monitor the participants' safety and well-being while on the exchange, and to create opportunities for participants to share potential issues and resolve them promptly. The award recipient will be required to provide proper staff supervision and facilitation to ensure that the teenagers have a safe and pedagogically rich program. Staff, along with mentors will assist the youth with cultural adjustments, provide societal context to enhance learning, and counsel students as needed.
- 7) Make proper arrangements for participants' religious observances.
- 8) Facilitate, in coordination with the U.S. Embassies, continued engagement among the participants, offering opportunities to reinforce the ideas, values, and skills imparted during the exchange.
- 9) Collaborate with U.S. Embassies to design and implement an evaluation plan that assesses the short-, medium-, and long-term impact of the project on the participants as well as on U.S. host and home communities.

Please note:

The ECA award for the TechGirls program will take the form of a cooperative agreement with the award recipient. In a cooperative agreement, the Department of State is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine grant monitoring. The Department's activities and responsibilities for the TechGirls program are as follows:

- 1) Provide advice and assistance in the execution of all program components.
- 2) Manage the recruitment and selection of the participants, and oversee pre- and post-exchange activities in each country.

- 3) Identify and arrange for adult flight escorts to accompany participants on the international flights, in coordination with the award recipient.
- 4) Issue DS-2019 forms and J-1 visas. All foreign participants will travel on a U.S. Government designation for the J Exchange Visitor Program.
- 5) Provide the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) health benefits plan for foreign participants. [The award recipient will enroll participants in ASPE.]
- 6) Facilitate interaction within the Department of State, to include ECA, the regional bureau, and overseas embassies and consulates.
- 7) Arrange meetings with Department of State officials in Washington, D.C. and the participating countries.
- 8) Approve all printed or web-based program materials, including publicity materials and the final calendar of exchange activities.
- 9) Monitor and evaluate the program, through regular communication with the award recipient and possibly one or more site visits, as necessary.
- 10) Perform an annual performance evaluation/review. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all option years.

Additional Information:

Award recipients will retain the name “TechGirls” to identify their project. All materials, publicity, and correspondence related to the program will acknowledge this as a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. The Bureau will retain copyright use of and be allowed to distribute materials related to this program as it sees fit.

The award recipient must inform the ECA Program Officer and participating U.S. Embassies of their progress at each stage of the project’s implementation in a timely fashion, and will be required to obtain approval of any significant program changes in advance of their implementation.

Proposals must demonstrate how the stated objectives will be met. The proposal narrative should provide detailed information on the major project activities, and applicants should explain and justify their programmatic choices. Please be sure to refer to the complete Solicitation Package – this RFGP, the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI), and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) – for further information.

Proposal narratives should include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional option years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base year program, with the understanding that the program design, duration and participant numbers would be similar when/if the subsequent two option years are exercised. ECA will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if an option year will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all option years.

II. Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under number I above.

Fiscal Year Funds: FY 2015 – \$190,000 base year; FY 2016 – \$190,000, option year-one; FY 2017 – \$190,000, option year- two, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

Approximate Total Funding: \$570,000. This figure represents base year plus two option years, pending successful performance and the availability of funds.

Approximate Number of Awards: One

Approximate Average Award: \$190,000

Anticipated Award Date: Pending the availability of funds, February 2015

Anticipated Project Completion Date: May 30, 2018. This date reflects the anticipated duration of the award – one base year plus two option years.

Additional Information:

A cooperative agreement will be awarded for a period of 12-16 months (base year) with options for two additional 12-16 month periods (option years one and two). ECA will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise an option year at least 90 days in advance of expiration of the current year after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to exercise option years will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

III. Eligibility Information:

III.1. Eligible applicants: Applications may be submitted by public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

III.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, the Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with OMB Circular A-110, (Revised), Subpart C.23 - Cost Sharing and Matching. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution will be reduced in like proportion.

III.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

- a) Bureau grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award in an amount over \$130,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this exchange program. Therefore, organizations

with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

- b) Proposed sub-award recipients are also limited to grant funding of \$130,000 or less if they do not have four years of experience in conducting international exchanges.
- c) The Bureau encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.
- d) Technical Eligibility: All applicants must comply with the requirements or they will result in your proposal being declared technically ineligible and given no further consideration in the review process.

Please note: Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

IV. Application and Submission Information:

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the RFGP deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

IV.1. Contact Information to Request an Application Package:

Please contact the Youth Programs Division, ECA/PE/C/PY, SA-5, 3rd Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, by telephone (202) 632-9261 or E-mail: ShieldsSD@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. It also contains the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document, which provides specific information, award criteria and budget instructions tailored to this competition.

Please specify Program Officer Sarah Shields and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

IV.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Please read all information before downloading.

IV.3. Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under IV.3f. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

IV.3a. You are required to have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities.

Obtaining a DUNS number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a DUNS number, access <http://www.dunandbradstreet.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your DUNS number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package.

IV.3b. All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget.

Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document and the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

IV.3c. All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the System for Award Management (SAM) database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 1) Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one- page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

If your organization is a private nonprofit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

IV.3d. All ECA awards recipient organizations must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing www.GrantSolutions.gov. To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click “Getting Started-Request a User Account” at

<http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday and can be reached at help@grantsolutions.gov or 1-866-577-0771.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

IV.3d.1. Adherence to All Regulations Governing the J Visa

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is the official program sponsor of the exchange program covered by this RFGP, and an employee of the Bureau will be the "Responsible Officer" for the program under the terms of 22 CFR 62, which covers the administration of the Exchange Visitor Program (J visa program). Under the terms of 22 CFR 62, organizations receiving awards (either a grant or cooperative agreement) under this RFGP will be third parties "cooperating with or assisting the sponsor in the conduct of the sponsor's program." The actions of recipient organizations shall be "imputed to the sponsor in evaluating the sponsor's compliance with" 22 CFR 62. Therefore, the Bureau expects that any organization receiving an award under this competition will render all assistance necessary to enable the Bureau to fully comply with 22 CFR 62 et seq.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the secure and proper administration of Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by recipient organizations and program participants to all regulations governing the J visa program status. Therefore, proposals should explicitly state in writing that the applicant is prepared to assist the Bureau in meeting all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 62. If your organization has experience as a designated Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor, the applicant should discuss their record of compliance with 22 CFR 62 et. seq., including the oversight of their Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements.

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of ECA will be responsible for issuing DS-2019 forms to participants in this program.

A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
U.S. Department of State
SA-44, Suite 668
301 4th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20547

IV.3d.2. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support of Diversity' section of this document as well as the DIVERSITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

IV.3d.3. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project's objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "SMART" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame), the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this RFGP.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the RFGP (listed here in increasing order of importance):

- 1) **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
- 2) **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
- 3) **Participant behavior**, concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
- 4) **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

Please note: Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

IV.3d.4. Virtual Exchange Component: ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our International Exchange Alumni space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

IV.3e. Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

IV.3e.1. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients: All ECA Grant Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

IV.3e.2. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. Budget requests should be for approximately \$190,000. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

For competitions that will be renewed through the option year, applicants must submit:

- 1) the SF-424A which must include the budget request amount for the base-year of the program;
- 2) a detailed proposal narrative and budget for the base year of funding (Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instruction Document (PSI) for general budget guidance.). The narrative should also include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base year, plus two additional option years, pending successful program performance and availability of funds; and
- 3) an abbreviated/estimated summary budget presenting the total projected administrative and program costs for the anticipated total duration of programming (base year, plus two option years).

To exercise the option year mechanism the recipient will be required to submit:

- 1) timely quarterly performance and financial reports;
- 2) a request in writing to ECA at least 90 days in advance of the expiration of the current program year;
- 3) a summary budget that projects program expenses through the end of the current year;
- 4) a detailed budget outlining both administrative and program expenses for the requested option year; and
- 5) a brief narrative to support the continuation of the award.

The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will:

1) closely monitor the recipient's performance through site visits, desk audits, mandatory quarterly performance and financial reports, consultations, and other forms of communication and dialogue before exercising additional option years. (Additional details regarding monitoring and oversight of the program by ECA representatives will be provided at the time the base-year award is made.)

2) review and evaluate all mandatory quarterly program and financial reports:

- All program and financial reporting requirements must be current and up-to-date before the Bureau will exercise additional option years.

- Any/all concerns, issues, or modifications requested by the Grants Officer or Program Officer to the original program design or method of implementation must be responded to in writing.
- The ECA Grants Officer and Program Officer will review and advise of ECA's approval or disapproval of the response before issuing subsequent option years.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

IV.3f. Application Deadline and Methods of Submission:

Application Deadline Date: Tuesday, December 2, 2014

Method of Submission: Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the "Find" portion of the system.

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov

Please follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/GetStarted>).

Several of the steps in the Grants.gov registration process could take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this RFGP to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays

Email: support@grants.gov

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes

IV.3g. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

V. Application Review Information

V.1. REVIEW PROCESS

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

- 1) **Quality of the program idea:** Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. The proposal should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. The proposed program should be creative and well developed, age-appropriate, respond to the design outlined in the solicitation, and demonstrate originality. It should be clearly and accurately written, substantive, and with sufficient detail. Proposals should also include a plan to support participants' follow-on activities upon their return home.
- 2) **Program planning and ability to achieve program objectives:** A detailed agenda and work plan should clearly demonstrate how project objectives will be achieved. The agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. The substance of exchange activities, such as workshops, presentations, site visits, and follow on project planning should be described in detail.

- 3) **Support of diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity. Applicants should demonstrate readiness to accommodate participants with physical disabilities.
- 4) **Institutional capacity and track record:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program goals. The three areas of competency will be considered. The proposal should demonstrate an institutional record, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
- 5) **Program evaluation:** The proposal should include a plan to evaluate the program's success in meeting its goals, both as the activities unfold and after they have been completed. The Bureau recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The award recipient will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.
- 6) **Cost-effectiveness and cost sharing:** The applicant should demonstrate efficient use of Bureau funds. The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. The proposal should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions, which demonstrates institutional and community commitment.

VI. Award Administration Information

VI.1a. Award Notices:

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive an Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and mailed to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition.

VI.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following:

Office of Management and Budget Circular A-122, "Cost Principles for Nonprofit

Organizations.”

Office of Management and Budget Circular A-21, “Cost Principles for Educational Institutions.”

OMB Circular A-87, “Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Governments”.

OMB Circular No. A-110 (Revised), Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Nonprofit Organizations.

OMB Circular No. A-102, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants-in-Aid to State and Local Governments.

OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Government, and Non-profit Organizations

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>.

<http://fa.statebuy.state.gov>

VI.3. Reporting Requirements:

You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

Mandatory:

- 1) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). The first page of the Performance Progress Report form (SF-PPR) must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here: http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68. The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to GrantSolutions.gov, in the same manner specified for the programmatic reports. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.
- 2) A SF-PPR, “Performance Progress Report” Cover Sheet must be submitted with all program performance reports.
- 3) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;

- 4) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.
- 5) Because this competition allows for the exercise of Option Years, applicants must be placed on a mandatory quarterly program and financial reporting cycle. The due dates for these reports will be included in the final assistance award document. The program and financial reports must demonstrate substantial progress by addressing progress towards the original approved goals and objectives, relative activities and events, and supporting fiscal data. The reports will be reviewed by both the assigned Grant Officer and Program Officer.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to IV. Application and Submission Instructions (IV.3.d.3) above for Program Monitoring and Evaluation information.

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

VI.4. Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) Itineraries of international and domestic travel, providing dates of travel and cities in which any exchange experiences take place.

VII. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: Sarah Shields, Youth Programs Division, ECA/PE/C/PY/T, SA-5, 3rd Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20522-0503, by telephone (202) 632-9261 or e-mail ShieldsSD@state.gov.

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this RFGP should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the RFGP deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

VIII. Other Information:**Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this RFGP are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the RFGP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section VI.3 above.

Evan Ryan
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State

October 8, 2014